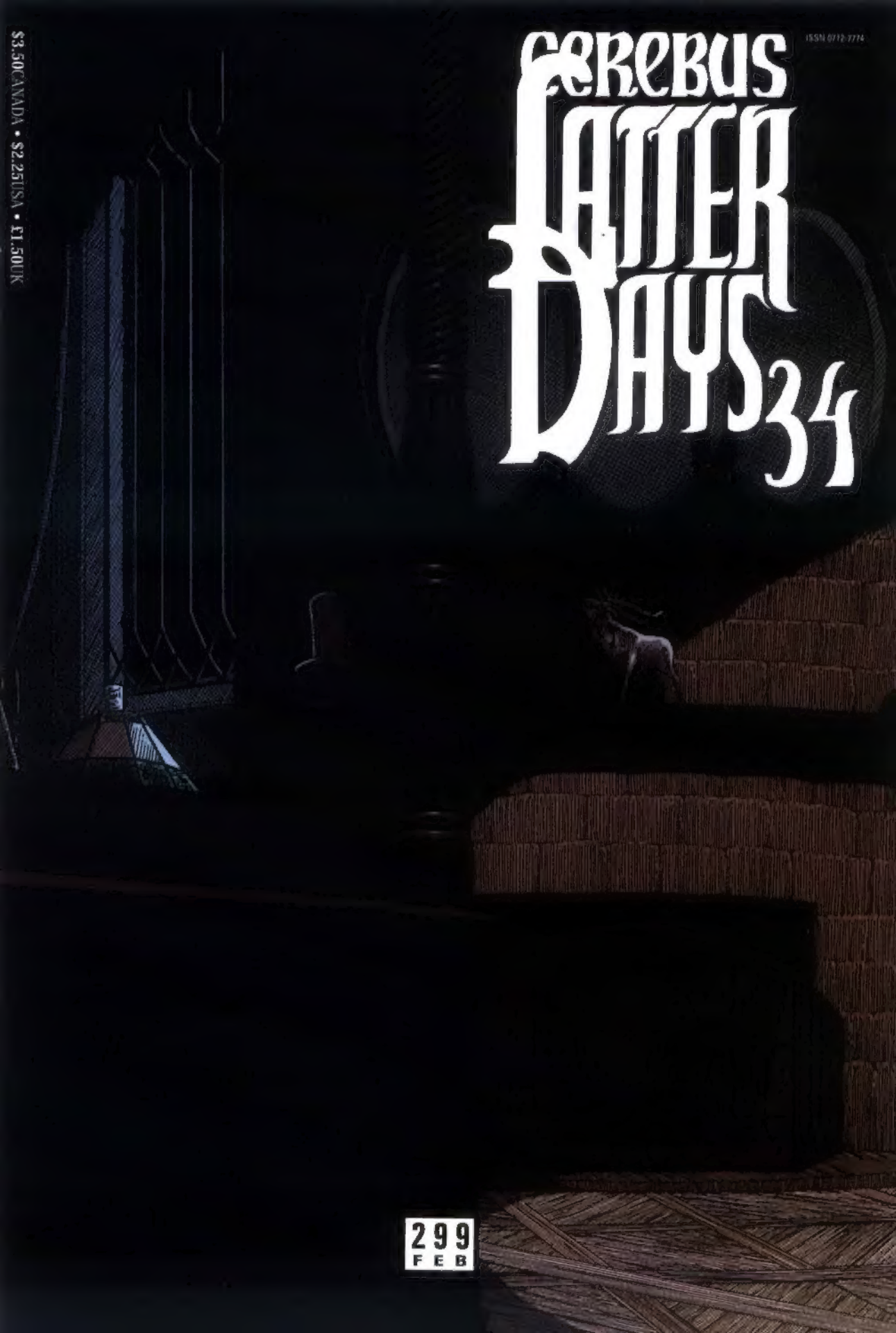
ISSN 0712-7774

CEREBUS

LATTER DAYS 34

$3.50CANADA • $2.25USA • £1.50UK



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Endings VII

What I hope to do—beginning in Following Cerebus *no.2 (and Craig and John seem open to the idea)—is a column called "About Last Issue," a vehicle for dispensing my (as usual) unique and idiosyncratic perspectives: in this instance on* Cerebus, *as perceptions about the completed work and its components begin to evolve. So, in that spirit, here's "About This Issue's Back Cover":*

" Is Dave guilty of presenting the second half of the story in such a way that it says about the first half, 'Just kidding'?" queries the back cover copy by Craig and John. I think this reflects a near-universal consensus about the book that, at this moment in time, attempts to separate the first half from the second half—most commonly, "first half good, second half not-so-good". What this overlooks, in my view, is that it is a very, very recent development in the *Cerebus* readership to see any level of quality at all in *High Society* and *Church & State*. The consensus around the conclusion of *Church & State* was that I had screwed up the book royally with *High Society* (which was "too slow and too boring") and then made things infinitely worse with *Church & State*. The "home base" perception for the vast majority of the *Cerebus* readership even as late as 1988 (when *Church & State* concluded) was still Cerebus the Barbarian, the "funny animal Conan" sword-and-sorcery parody and the consensus held that it was necessary to have Cerebus go back to being a barbarian after *High Society*. This is very much at variance with current revisionist mythology—most recently in Chris Shulgan's *Saturday Night* article—which holds that *High Society* at its conclusion was met with "widespread acclaim". There was no acclaim for *Cerebus* (widespread or otherwise) after Kim Thompson's favourable review of the first dozen or so issues in *The Comics Journal* back in 1979. And, of course, from the perspective of a fantasy/sword & sorcery fan, the point is completely valid. Robert E. Howard would *never* have made Conan civilized, even for a single short story. It would have destroyed what Conan was. The only point of curiosity was how lame would my attempt to have Cerebus' too-long-delayed reversion to his barbarian nature prove to be? (while still collectively allowing for the possibility—however remote—that I might have an amazing writerly trump card up my sleeve). *Jaka's Story* only compounded the problem from the viewpoint of my remnant readership. Not only is Cerebus now *civilized*, now he's a complete *wimp*! The book for them, was permanently, irretrievably *wrecked*.

The internal reality of each book supersedes the internal reality of the previous one while maintaining continuity of detail and theme (reflecting my own view of what constitutes "a life"—that is, in the same way that your mature working life differs from your early working life differs from your school life). It seems to me that, depending on your personal viewpoint of what constitutes the "best possible reality," your tendency will be to see each book as having built upon the previous books, reaching a peak and then "Dave wrecks it after that". i.e. Someone who is happily married and in the same mental state as they were as a newlywed (God help them) will see *Jaka's Story* as the series' high watermark and everything after that as a bitter disappointment.

It is, of course, gratifying to me that *High Society* and *Church & State* and *Jaka's Story*—after more than a decade of being ignored and reviled—have established themselves alongside the "early funnier ones" in the Cerebus pantheon of his/my collective readership. My only hope is that *Mothers & Daughters*, *Guys*, *Rick's Story*, *Going Home* and *Latter Days* will one day achieve that distinction as well. Although I wouldn't expect it to happen for at least another decade or two.

I also think it worth considering that—since *any* author of *any* creative work, metaphorically most resembles God *relative to* that creative work—those who are the most resistant to my having entered the story (Dave Sim is *in Cerebus*) are likely to be atheists or agonistics "enacting" their own resistance both to the idea of God's existence and to the fact that God is an active presence in their own "story".

* * * * * *

Okay, that'll about do it for the front of the book. Those of you interested in bidding on Cerebus *original artwork, we're going to be trying to offer on eBay a variety of pieces to fit every budget (such as tracing paper pencil roughs) (if it's any consolation, we can't afford to buy* Cerebus *original artwork, either) which will be previewed, monthly, at* **www.beguiling.com,** *starting 15 March of this year. Stay tuned to* www.beguiling.com *if you don't want to miss out.*

See you "around back" for the second last "Aardvark Comment".

CEREBUS

NO. 299 FEBRUARY 2004

DAVE SIM
Creator, Writer
Characters
(interior art & cover)
pencil & ink,
mechanical tones,
lettering

GERHARD
Background Artist
Cover Artist
pencil & ink
Cover Technician

LATTER DAYS

•

PROLOGUE
(Cerebus 266
and 267)

•

BOOK ONE
(Cerebus 268 to
288)

•

BOOK TWO
(Cerebus 289 to
300)

PUBLISHED MONTHLY BY
AARDVARK-VANAHEIM INC.
P.O. BOX 1674, STATION C
KITCHENER, ON N2G 4R2

ALL CONTENTS ©2004
DAVE SIM AND GERHARD

PRINTED IN CANADA BY
PRENEY PRINT & LITHO INC.
WINDSOR, ONTARIO

Hek Hek Hek
SHOOT.
YOU STILL INSIST THAT THE GINEVRA CHARACTER IN F. STOP KENNEDY'S "PLEASURES SIMPLE LIFE"
WASN'T BASED ON JOANNE.
THAT'S RIGHT. SHE WASN'T.

THAT IT WASN'T JOANNE ON THE BARGE RIDE WHO TOLD KENNEDY ABOUT "THE ETERNAL SINGULARITY AND HIS FIRST CREATION"?

JOANNE'S THEORIES - WHICH YOU LATER STOLE AND USED AS THE BASIS FOR YOUR TORAH COMMENTARIES?

IS THAT... WHAT THEY SAY?

AND YET YOU ADMIT THAT THE BARGE RIDE TOOK PLACE IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE EVENTS DOCUMENTED IN THE BOOK OF RICK.

HM?

AND YET YOU ADMIT

OH AYE... AYE. THAT'S THAT'S WHEN THE BARGE RIDE HAPPENED ALL RIGHT.

WELL.

JUST HOW GULLIBLE DO YOU THINK PEOPLE ARE, FATHER?

YOU JUST HAPPENED TO FIND ANOTHER "DIVINELY RADIANT" FEMALE RIGHT AFTER JOANNE...?

WHAT ARE YOU THINKING ABOUT?

JUST REMEMBERING ALL OF THOSE GREAT FISHING TRIPS WE TOOK TOGETHER...

YOU KNOW.. THOSE WERE THE HAPPIEST

HA HA HA HA

"ALL" THOSE GREAT FISHING TRIPS?

HA HA HA HA

YOU MEAN

"ALL" BOTH OF THEM?

HA HA HA

THERE WERE ONLY TWO OF THEM, FATHER. ONE WHEN I WAS TWELVE AND THE OTHER WHEN I WAS TWENTY. GOD.

HOW I REMEMBER THEM BOTH... STUCK OUT IN THE MIDDLE OF THE WOODS...

DRINKING THAT WRETCHED SOUR BEER (WHATEVER IT WAS CALLED)

SKIC-TICK

NOTHING TO DO BUT LISTEN TO YOUR "HAM" AND "MOOSE" ANECDOTES HOUR AFTER HOUR

AS I TOLD MOTHER AFTER THE SECOND ONE!

"I BELIEVE I HAVE FOUND THE SECRET TO IMMORTALITY..."

"MY FATHER'S FISHING TRIPS."

"YOU DON'T ACTUALLY LIVE FOR ALL ETERNITY"

"BUT IT SURE FEELS LIKE IT"

SHE THOUGHT THAT WAS HYSTERICAL.

SHE.

WOULD.

WHY DID YOU DO IT, FATHER?

DO WHAT?

WHY DID YOU TELL MOTHER THAT YOU HAD TO GUESS AT THE "WORD OF TRUTH" 2

"KUMQUAT" AND...

"SHOELACES"

AND...

FLUMP

NOT.

THIS

AGAIN.

BUT-- IT JUST DOESN'T MAKE ANY SENSE. THE WISE FELLOWS HAD BEEN DEAD AND BURIED FOR YEARS AT THAT POINT.

YOU WERE THE ONLY ONE STILL ALIVE

WHO KNEW THE TRUTH.

SKETCH

YOUR FATHER

PROMISED

YOUR MOTHER

HE WOULD NEVER LIE TO HER

ABOUT ANYTHING

BUT-- THE "WORD OF TRUTH." YOU MUST'VE KNOWN THE ENTIRE CEREBATE FAITH WAS BASED ON THE "WORD OF

SHER-SHER.

SHE SHER?

(SORRY)

SHE-SHER?

WHAT'S IN THE BOX?

YOU'RE CHANGING THE SUBJECT

AYE.

OW! CEREBUS' NECK.

WHAT'S IN THE BOX?

HA HA HA

A MARVELOUS SURPRISE, FATHER

DID YOU KNOW CIRIN IS STILL ALIVE ?

SKTCH

NAY

WELL...

SHE IS.

Sktch

SHE'S IN EVEN WORSE SHAPE THAN YOU

IF YOU CAN BELIEVE IT

MOTHER'S PEOPLE HAVE BEEN CAREFULLY PRYING

HER SECRETS OUT OF HER ONE

BY ONE

SKRT

HUNH

LAY HER TO REST

HER GO TO HER GRAVE WITH ALL HER

OH, BUT WAIT 'TIL YOU HEAR, FATHER

HER PLANT EXPERIMENTS 2

TAKING *PLANTS* APART AND THEN PUTTING THEM BACK *TOGETHER?*

WITH *OTHER* PLANTS?

SICK

HA HA HA

YOU'LL *GUESS* NEVER FATHER

SHE FOUND A WAY TO MAKE IT WORK WITH *ANIMAL* LIFE

SKETCH

TOO.

THAT'S ENOUGH.

SKETCH

WOOP!

HA HA HA

WOOPSIE DAISY ♪

SKRCH

GET IT OUT OF HERE

SEE FARTHER?

WOOP! ♪

HA HA HA

WOOPSIE DAISY ♪

SKRCH

GET IT OUT OF HERE

SEE FARTHER?

HAH

YES YOU DID ♪

HAHAHA

YES YOU DID ♪

LOOK FARTHER! ♪

OH.

BAM

YOU SLASH SA D YOU WANTED TO KNOW

WHAT'S IN THE BOX

NONONO LOOK FATHER SEE?

IT'S A LION'S CUB

WITH A BABY'S HEAD

♪ISN'T THAT AMAZING?♪

OH GOD.

OH.

GOD.

OH

GOD

YOU DO RECOGNIZE THE BABY, ♪ DON'T YOU, FATHER?

GOD

SICK

FUCKS

BEEN

UP

ON

HAHAHA

WELL YOU SHOULD.

IT'S ME ♪

WE'VE GOT SIX OF THEM NOW.

MOTHER GANG

JUST AS SOON AS WE CAN GET ONE OF THEM TO LIVE PAST THE AGE OF THREE

WE'RE GOING BACK DOWN INTO EGYPT

NEW JOANNE

AND NEW SHEEHEP ANKH

OR

IF YOU PREFER

THE NEW ASENATH AND THE NEW ZAPHNATH PANEAH

FIRST BOOK OF MOSHE

CHAPTER FORTY-ONE

VERSES?

FORTY-FIVE

YOU DO KNOW YOUR SCRIPTURE FATHER

JOSEPH AND HIS

AND HIS EGYPTIAN WHORE

HA HA HA HA HA

CAN'T YOU JUST IMAGINE WHAT I'LL LOOK LIKE WHEN I'M FULLY GROWN?

ONCE MOTHER'S PEOPLE HAVE FIGURED OUT THE CRAFT BEHIND GIANTISM?

I'LL LOOK

LIKE

THIS!

NO, FATHER IT'S NOT AN EXAGGERATION.

MOTHER SAYS

AS SOON AS HER PEOPLE DISCOVER THE CRAFT BEHIND GIANTISM

THEY WILL BE ABLE TO MAKE ME FORTY FEET TALL

OR TALLER!

THIS

NO, FATHER IT'S NOT AN EXAGGERATION

MOTHER SAYS

AS SOON AS HER PEOPLE DISCOVER THE CRAFT BEHIND GIANTISM

THEY WILL BE ABLE TO MAKE ME FORTY FEET TALL

OR TALLER!

I'LL BE WORSHIPPED FATHER

WORSHIPPED AS A GOD!

HARMACHIS!

THE EGYPTIAN GOD OF MORNING

I'LL BE WORSHIPPED FATHER
WORSHIPPED AS A GOD!
HARMACHIS!
THE EGYPTIAN GOD OF MORNING!

BE

YOU.

THAT THING!

HIS HEAD WAS GROWN FROM PIECES OF MY BRAIN TISSUE, FATHER II

IS! ... ME!

WAAAW

TALK SENSE, BOY!

ARE YOU INSIDE IT?

ARE YOU? CAN YOU FEEL YOUR HANDS HOLDING YOU UP ?

I'M

CAN YOU?

AAAA

I MIGHT'VE KNOWN YOU WOULDN'T UNDERSTAND

WAAAA

UHH

thump

WELL, FINE! FINE!

I HOPE YOU AND O'REILLY AND THE SCATTERED REMNANTS OF YOUR FOLLOWERS ENJOY THE LIMITED TIME WHICH REMAINS TO YOU...

SKITCH SKITCH SKITCH SKITCH

...BECAUSE THERE'S A SURPRISE ON THE WAY, FATHER-- A VERY, VERY BIG SURPRISE! TENS OF THOUSANDS OF SURPRISES IN POINT OF FACT!

STUMP

WAAAAAAAAA

A NEW GROUP OF BELIEVERS, FATHER...

...CALLED...

MUSLIMS!

AND FROM WHAT I UNDERSTAND?

AAAAAA

SKITCH SKITCH SKITCH

THEY'VE TAKEN A DECIDEDLY DIM VIEW

OF WHAT YOU'VE DONE WITH THEIR GOD

WWWW

SKITCH SKITCH SKITCH

STOMP STOMP STOMP

GOOD BYE FATHER

SLAM

WAAAAAAA

SHEP-SHEP!

SHEP SHEP!

SHEP SHEP!

WHERE IS HE?

WHERE IS HE?

SHNT)) SHNT))

IF THOSE IDIOT HOUSEKEEPERS HAVE

AH!

-RIN-

CRINKCRINKCRINK

FLUMP

SHEP-SHEP!

BYY GUM! CEREBUS IS GOING TO KILL HIM!

OW OW OW

BYYY GUM! CEREBUS IS GOING TO KILL BOTH OF THEM!

Aardvark Comment

Finally. A response to the Impossible Things to Believe Before Breakfast. And only three years late. Ah, well. Better late than never. But first, a word from husband, Robert Gavila (albeit from three years ago).

* * * * * * *

April 30, 2001

Dave,

I have little doubt that *Cerebus* #265 is the most important comic book of 2001. Heck, I'll even admit I wish you would one day reprint your essays (as you did with the self-publishing theme) in a book so that I won't have to tell my friends that I found the most courageous, thought-provoking, original and articulate social commentary in a comic book. I've only just finished Tangent I and II and I am really enjoying this!

I shared your list of Impossible Things to Believe Before Breakfast with my new wife. Her reactions varied from absolute agreement (#1, 3, 4, 8), to conceding (with an embarrassed smile) that the unfairness revealed was 'only right' (#6, 10), to petty disqualifications ("It's the Synoptic *Bibles*, not Synoptic *Jesus*") (abortion), and outright dismissing (#5, 7). We only got as far as #10 before she decided it was late enough and we should get to sleep.

I enjoyed the Cerebus Story, too, of course, but your essays never fail to impress, and now amaze me. Keep this up. I'm sorry you lost the 'inputting' and support of Carol West and Diana Schutz (both in the same month!), hired hands to be sure but long-term comrades on this journey of yours. Keep your chin up and know this: I am eagerly watching to see where this all ends. I salute your valor under fire. Keep up the fight. At your cover price, this is a bargain!

Your fan,
Robert Gavila
20-23 43rd Street
Astoria, New York 11105

Well, thank you Robert. And thanks for your mini-comic-with-a-Christian-them you gave me at SPACE last year. Didn't make the cut for the Day Prize Short List, but, hey, there's always next year. And speaking of your new wife (new for 2001, anyway), here she is now

* * * * * * *

October 20, 2003

Dear Dave Sim,

We met at the dinner event you graciously treated all exhibitors to after the 2003 S.P.A.C.E. convention in Columbus, Ohio. As my husband and I prepared to leave, we stopped by your table and we entered a perhaps ill-timed but nonetheless heated discussion about the shared responsibilities of husbands and wives in the raising of children. I promised you then to write to each of your sixteen points about the "sixteen impossible things" you feel feminists insist you must believe before breakfast. You made a point about how not one woman replied to each and every one of your sixteen points. And so, a promise being a promise, while I do not make a living writing, I have taken the time to address your sixteen points and hopefully make a few of my own.

One Woman's Response to "Impossible Things to Believe before Breakfast"

> *1. "A mother who works a full-time job and delegates to strangers the raising of her children eight hours a day, five days a week does just as good a job as a mother who hand-rears her children full time."*

Strangers raising your children can never be good. It is equaly impossible to believe at any time in the symmetrical equivalent: "A man who works a full time job and delegates to strangers the raising of his children eight hours a day, five days a week does just as good a job as a father who hand-rears his children full time."

> *2. "It makes great sense for the government to pay 10 to 15,000 dollars a year to fund a daycare space for a child so its mother—who pays perhaps 2,000 dollars in taxes—can be a contributing member of society."*

No, the government should be giving women public assistance if they do not have sufficient income with which to live. This is called public assistance, or wel-

fare, or, more properly, Aid to Families with Dependent Children. Currently, public assistance is not enough to live on.

If the government subsidizes day care, women can work and possibly earn enough to live on. I don't have the data to support this, but I think a daycare center usually supervises more than one child. Your figure of 10 to 15,000 dollars a year deserves clarification: is that per child?

In the case of the mother who has been abandoned by her spouse, the government has made it such that women have no other choice but to leave their children in daycare and go out to get a job because public assistance is not enough to live on.

3. "A woman's doctor has more of a valid claim to participate in the decision to abort a fetus than does the father of that fetus."

I cannot respond to that because it is ridiculous: The woman makes the decision and the doctor performs the service; the doctor participates in the service, not the decision. The father of the fetus should have a right to the decision only if he is the husband and is taking a responsible role. However, ultimately, the woman is the carrier of the embryo and must make the ultimate decision, as currently is her right.

4. "So long as a woman makes a decision after consulting with her doctor, she is incapable of making an unethical choice."

A woman, as well as a man, is capable of making an unethical choice, with or without consulting with a doctor. A doctor, too, is capable of making an unethical choice.

5. "A car with two steering wheels, two gas pedals and two brakes drive more efficiently than a car with one steering wheel, one gas pedal and one brake which is why marriage should always be an equal partnership."

A car does not work more efficiently with two steering wheels, two gas pedals and two brakes. A marriage is between two equals and each one has a role to play. Because each has different strengths, in some circumstances one will lead while in other circumstances the other will lead. It's all based on respect and acknowledging strengths.

6. "It is absolutely necessary for women to be allowed to join or participate fully in any gathering place for men, just as it is absolutely necessary that there be "women only" environment from which men are excluded."

No public place should be absolutely forbidden to either men or women. And, in general, women or men should not be excluded from private organizations. Bathrooms are one exception: dignity is involved here. Places where privacy needs to be respected should be allowed to exclude the opposite sex.

This standard could lead to circumstances where the attending minority member is uncomfortable, but, by law, no group should be excluded. A group of men can get together for a round of golf at a golf club. Women should not be excluded from that golf club. The women and the men can simply choose to not play the same round together. Male and female journalists should be excluded from locker rooms at professional sporting events unless both have equal access. Men should not have more opportunities than women, and vice versa.

One exception might be boys' only or girls' only private schools; this, in my opinion, should be permitted because it serves the purpose of development. The budding sexuality of teenagers distracts them from their studies, and excluding that distraction has been found to be favorable to one's education.

7. "Because it involves taking jobs away from men and giving them to women, affirmative action makes for a fairer and more just society."

Oh yeah, they go fire a man and give the job to a woman? That's not what affirmative action means. If a white person and a black person, or a male and female, with equal qualifications apply for a job, the employer should consider the minority first if that minority (white or black, male or female) is under-represented in that company. The purpose of this consideration is to correct the under-representation of these groups due to past biased hiring patterns.

8. "It is important to have lower physical standards for women firepersons and women policepersons so that, one day, half of all firepersons and policepersons will be women, thus more effectively protecting the safety of the public."

I agree that there should not be different standards for male and female job candidates. But police candidates should be tested for communication skills and intelligence, as well as physical fitness. It is impossible to believe that one should have lower physical standards for female firepersons. We shouldn't be lowering the standards for any group.

9. "Affirmative action at colleges and universities needs to be maintained now that more women than men are being enrolled, in order to keep from giving men an unfair advantage academically."

If more women than men are enrolled in college and universities, then affirmative action is not necessary in this area. But if there are more women than men enrolled in colleges and universities, is this because of

affirmative action or simply because more women apply? And would this ratio drop if affirmative action was removed? If affirmative action is necessary, then it goes across all areas: colleges, job opportunities, housing, etc. College enrollments should reflect the demographics of the society.

10. "Having ensured that there is no environment for men where women don't belong (see no. 6) it is important to have zero tolerance of any expression or action which any women might regard as sexist to ensure greater freedom for everyone."

I'm having trouble with this "impossible thing to believe before breakfast" because it references no. 6, which you and I somewhat agree on is impossible to believe before breakfast

If a group of men are hanging out and saying sexist things, that's their right, just as women can hang out together and say sexist things. But in a public arena it is inappropriate If a bunch of women hang out and say crude things, I will think they are low class, just as men who say crude things are low class. But I won't deny them the right to be crude. In a public or work environment, no one should feel humiliated or embarrassed of their sexuality (or race, color, or religion) as a result of the way someone talks about them.

11. "Only in a society which maintains a level of 95% of alimony and child support being paid by *men* to *women can men and women be considered as equals."*

Having talked to you in person, I know that you think women should stay home and take care of the children. However, you want it both ways. When a man leaves his family—and usually in better financial circumstances than the former female partner—you resent a.) the mother obtaining custody of the children and b.) the man paying child support

Child support is based on a percent of a man's income. (And men often hide income in order to avoid a fair child support assessment.) Child support is often not enough to support the family. This forces many women to go to work. That's why women and children are often in the highest poverty percentage. Women and children suffer due to inadequate child support or no child support at all

Women miss out on job opportunities because they stay at home and take care of the children. When a man abandons his family and the spouse is forced to go back to work, she is usually at a disadvantage in the job market. There are cases in which the opposite is found: the mother earns more than the father and pays support to him if he has custody. Alimony is rarely paid nowadays.

12. "An airline stewardess who earned $20,000 a year at the time that she married a baseball player earning $6 million a year is entitled, in the event of divorce, to $3 million for each year of the marriage and probably more"

Yes, when a couple marries, they share each other's fate, good or bad. If the stewardess marries the baseball player and contributes to his physical and emotional well-being, then she is an equal partner. And this holds true in instances where a woman makes more money than her husband. In the event of a divorce, each is entitled to an equal share of the income

13. "A man's opinions on how to rear and/or raise a child are invalid because his is not the child's mother. However, his financial obligation is greater because no woman gets pregnant by herself."

The man's opinions on how to rear a child are valid if he loves the child and is aware of and involved with the day-to-day needs of the child. The same applies to the mother

Some children are not raised by their mother or father, but by grandparents or other guardians. The opinion of the person most directly involved with the care of the child is usually the most valid opinion as long as the parent guardian is not dysfunctional.

The financial burden of raising a child lies primarily with both parents. However, if one of the parents sacrifices his/her own career to stay home with the child, the other parent assumes a greater share of the financial responsibility for the greater good of the family.

14. "Disagreeing with any of these statements makes you anti-woman and/or a misogynist."

Yes, this is impossible to believe. Disagreeing with any of these statements doesn't make you anti-woman. But it doesn't preclude that possibility either.

15. "Children must be allowed to raise themselves and determine for themselves what does and does not constitute ethical, responsible behaviour."

Again, we agree here. Children do not have the moral maturity to take responsibility for themselves. It is a gradual process which takes time and the guidance of loving adults

16 "When one is loved unreservedly, one is treated with willful condescension and varying degrees of contempt."

Yes, this is impossible to believe. To love someone unreservedly means that you respect him/her completely. In child rearing, both parents need to respect and listen to each other. Neither should abdicate

responsibility.

End points:

Who makes you feel that these sixteen impossible things must be embraced before breakfast? Feminists? There are some sub-groups of feminists who believe in different things. I would not be playing the "voodoo professional" to wonder what personal traumas fed your unique point of view. Perhaps you went through a bad relationship (or two) and subsequently never met the right person. You can stay on a mountaintop, removed from the risks of intimate, loving relationships, in the interest of spiritual purity, but you also run the risk of becoming the 'Ted Kaczynski of comic books', alone in the woods, typing out a manifesto that contains some good points and some unfortunate errors as well.

None of your listed sixteen impossible things shock and offend so much as the often brutal carnage (and yes, sometimes funny and entertaining to some readers, I'm sure) that you subject your female readers to as you strive to make a point. Before reaching the aforementioned point fifteen, you suggest "No one wants to be a woman"; "...manufacturing a fairy-tale world for myself in which I was... indistinguishable from a gender which does not leak"; "...men take the gold medal and women, alas, take the silver"; "...gender interchangeability amounts to biological 'social-climbing' on the part of women..."; "...the screw-loose approximation of female 'reasoning'"—all in support of what?: what you perceive to be the root cause of a child's reaching for items on the shelves of a shopping mall food court "in the soon-to-be-completely-uncivilized world on any given Saturday afternoon."? What experience do you have raising children?

You said to me "how dare you?" when I brushed aside the need to give careful, balanced consideration to the sixteen points you labored over. Well, I in turn ask how you dare contest the results of women who often have to raise children alone because their deadbeat husbands decided that this noisy job of disciplining and cleaning, and teaching children must certainly be below their grander world view immediately before they abandon them. Do you want to write about trends in our society? Write about the countless young boys who wish their fathers played a part in their lives. I meet them, as a teacher, every day of my professional career. *They tell me* they wish their fathers were active in their lives

I hope this reply satisfies the stringent standards you place on discussing the subject of interpersonal relationships and the evolving cultural norms that form the backdrop of those relationships within our Western society. And, again, thank you for treating the exhibitors at the S.P.A.C.E. convention to dinner.

Sincerely Yours,
Maria Rocconi-Gavila

I appreciate you taking the time and the trouble, Maria. Of course, I remember both you and Robert, particularly since, during the show, you had both been kind enough to attend Steve Peters' and my "Spirituality vs. God" panel (I was the one who suggested the name. Steve told me later that SPACE organizer Bob Corby asked him if he should supply the boxing gloves). Although you disagreed (as I recall) with my views on YHWH, you were at least interested, attentive and (a peculiarity in this day and age and most particularly at a comic-book convention) quite obviously and sincerely religiously devout. With the New York accent, I first guessed, of course, that you were Jewish (all New Yorkers being, in a real sense, honorary Jews) and only later when you and Robert came up to chat did I realize that you were a Christian. Maria-with-an-Italian-last-name? Roman Catholic is usually a safe guess. It's always a pleasure to chat, however briefly, with those who believe in God. It was for that reason that I found it disheartening later at Damon's Restaurant to discover that not only were you a Christian, but you were also a feminist. I think that the two will soon develop into the strongest of dichotomous political bedfellows but I forget that they are not, today, universally viewed as mutually exclusive.

(And I apologize for my "how dare you?" preface to my remarks. In my own defence, I'll point out that by the time of post-dinner at Damon's, I had been without sleep for the better part of thirty-six hours, having "slept" the night before at O'Hare Airport (when it was closed due to a snow storm)—and had been "on" for the previous eight hours (powered only by a bottle of Diet Coke, purchased exclusively for its caffeine-narcotic properties) answering questions, signing autographs, presenting the Day Prize plaques and participating in the aforementioned panel—and, consequently, I wasn't in the best frame of mind for an impromptu debate on the merits and demerits of feminist child-rearing)

Since I'm coming to the end of the trail, I'm tempted to indulge in the feminist vice of the self-righteous flat assertion as you have done in your letter. However, in my view, it seems to me to be a centerpiece of any civilized political discourse that one should always preface opinions with appropriate phrases so as to acknowledge that what one is venturing is a personal opinion and that dissenting opinions—arrived at in good conscience—exist. I recognize that feminists haven't yet, as I see it, matured into that conversational habit (probably because no one dares disagree with them out loud, besides me). I mention it here only because I know that you're a school teacher and I find it alarming that someone who purports to be a teacher of our civilization's youth hasn't acquired this basic accoutrement of what I see as basic conversational courtesy. Of course, I'm also (diplomatically, I think) wilfully overlooking that a great deal of evidence exists which would support the view that feminists don't believe feminism to be a political opinion—an idiosyn-

FIFTY YEARS DOWN THE ROAD

jam print
joe Matt, Chester Brown and Seth

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cratic way of looking at the world—but that they rather believe feminism to be a fact of life, an inherent and inevitable necessity like breathing or eating. Fortunately for me, as I say, my days of public discourse are numbered—just this and the next "Aardvark Comment" to go—and I think it preferable that I take my leave, personally, still observing the niceties of civilized conversation. However, I would ask you to consider that it is worth passing on to children the distinctions between facts and opinions and the good manners involved in identifying the latter as such where and when they arise in a given discussion, even though I'm pretty sure you won't.

And, with that, to your numbered points:

1. You appear to me, here, to be both careful and incautious. As I recall, your children are being raised (or, perhaps, reared) to a large extent by your parents, a not altogether unique feminist circumstance. There is a shading of (as I see it) self-serving nuance to your semantic distinction that grandparents are not technically "strangers," (which I concede is true) but also, I think, an evasion of the self-evident reality that a child's grandparents are not a child's parents. Whether that's merely a convenient distinction on your part (if one accepts it as true, it would let you "off the hook" for delegating your children's upbringing to others) or yet another example of the above-described tediously recurrent feministic semantic device: the flat assertion (being raised or reared by grandparents is an inherently good thing—just as good as being raised by one's own parents), I think you would run afoul of your feminist allies for thinking that there's something wrong in having complete strangers raising one's children. Having strangers rear one's children, as far as I can see, is accepted by most feminists not only as a self-evident good (again, the flat assertion) but as a central pillar in what passes for feminist political philosophy: that the raising of one's children by strangers is (again, the flat assertion) a fundamental human right. As Hillary Rodham Henhouse put it, It Takes A Village To Let Me Weasel Out From Under My Maternal Responsibilities.

Let me try a different distinction to try to illustrate my meaning: it seems to me that there are housewives and there are homemakers. A housewife is exactly what she sounds like: a wife who owns (or is, at least, legally entitled to) a house. She doesn't do anything, particularly, relative to that house. She buys furniture (or has it bought for her) and puts it where she wants it to go. She hires people to take care of her house. She cooks when she is inclined to (which is seldom). Mostly she mixes various foodstuffs with noodles and calls it cooking. She either does this full time or when she gets home from work. She orders a lot of pizza and other take-out and delivery foods or just lets everyone fend for themselves, snacking on the run on whatever is near-to-hand.

A homemaker, on the other hand, it seems to me, is cut from a different cloth.. She is adept at things, she makes a house into a home by her contribution to it. In exchange for having her material needs cared for, she finds ways to enhance both her and her husband's and their children's lives by creating the environment—the home, and all that that term entails, as distinct from a mere house—in which they live. When she cooks she actually cooks entire meals: she doesn't buy them in a cardboard box that can be dumped into a pan with some hamburger. Because she is the homemaker, around whom that home revolves, the pivotal presence in the family home, everyone else in the family accepts that it is expected of them to be home and sitting down to the meal she has prepared for them at a specific time every day. Much of what makes a home a home, in my view, issues forth from this basic truth of a family mealtime and makes of a woman a genuine epicentre, a central and needed presence, in our society. In my view, if there is no family mealtime, there is no family—merely people with very similar DNA sharing domestic arrangements. A family mealtime is, and has always been, where discipline and good table manners are learned and where social and conversational skills are acquired and sharpened. One does not learn discipline and good table manners and acquire and sharpen social and conversational skills grabbing slices of take-out pizza in front of the television.

In my experience

It was interesting to see the explosive and hypnotic effect Martha Stewart had on womankind, the way she awakened dormant feminine awareness that masculine women had spent three decades successfully (they thought, anyway) eradicating. I can't recall a previous anecdotal instance in the recent history of womankind which was met, simultaneously, both with such venomous loathing and heart-wrenching envy as was on exhibit at the very mention of the name Martha Stewart when she debuted in our degraded feminist society.

[Of course Stewart herself was an entirely fictional homemaker hybrid: she proved to be, in actual fact, just another garden-variety, grasping, materialistic, corporate barracuda and ball-busting feminist masquerading as a homemaker. But, whatever her actual nature as a person, what she was portraying and what she was disseminating—classical home-making—remains (as she was wont to put it) "a good thing"]

Of course, feminists—masculine women—being what they are, they just wanted to know how much it would cost to buy what Martha Stewart did ("Having It All,"—the first-generation feminist credo—having eroded into "Having Most of It and Putting the Rest on Too Many Credit Cards" for the new generation of income- and domestically-challenged feminists). After all (they figured) I have a nanny (or grandparents), cleaning help, decorators, caterers. They just needed to find a word for what it is Martha Stewart was and they would hire one to be that on their behalf while they were elsewhere busily pretending to be men. But they missed—and, I think, miss—the point. A homemaker

doesn't hire someone to make a home for her. She makes her own *home, not someone else's. Just as a* real *mother rears* her *children, not someone else's (and she doesn't hire someone to rear her children for her nor does she, pardon the bluntness of my opinion, foist them upon her parents). Martha Stewart was like the anti-Betty Friedan. Instead of sitting out in the suburbs fuming about being imprisoned by the patriarchy and having all her natural Marxist masculine abilities and Marxist masculine talents going to waste, she made use of her more naturally <u>feminine</u> abilities and talents—and I daresay (although I'm sure I couldn't get a feminist to admit it if I tied her to a red-ant hill) made it look to the average woman to be a lot more gratifying, satisfying, enjoyable and enticing than spending eight-hours-a-day, five-days-a-week in the corporate world pretending to be a man. Wherever it was that Martha Stewart reacquired all those (hitherto presumed) long-lost household aptitudes upon which she built her empire (and I wouldn't rule out the rumoured "enormous staff of gay men" behind the scenes), those aptitudes, it seems to me—founded as they are on the very idea of a home being distinct from a house, and that a home is something which needs, actively, to be "made": that a home doesn't just "occur" by filling a house with new furniture or new carpets—those aptitudes are still very much in danger of obliteration in our society as a result of our society being dominated by a mouthy minority of masculine women. How many generations of feminists already have lost—irretrievably LOST, Maria—generation upon generation of homemaker knowledge, having decades ago dismissed homemaker knowledge as "girly stuff". And (to me, the larger and more pertinent point) how few walking, talking repositories of such "girly stuff" resources remain post-1970? And what happens when the last of them dies out while her daughters and her daughters' peers are downtown bashing their little wannabe masculine heads against some corporate glass ceiling?*

Let me approach the question from another direction.

Consider the relationship of the Spirit of God and the Word as I outlined them in the Cerebus 289-290 *commentaries (which, I believe, approximates the first relationship between male and female). The (male) Spirit gathers the dust around about the (female) Word, which brings forth the Light. The Word actually doesn't exist in a conventional sense. It's vaginal in that way. It's empty. But, it can be filled and bring forth its own Light. This, in a nutshell, is the foundation of all life and all living with a very, very few exceptions in the world of nature. And for centuries upon centuries, that was what we, as men and women, had as the foundation of our lives and that was what worked. The home became a home because that was where the homemaker was. No homemaker? No home. The husband and father, in effect, "orbited" the home and the homemaker that "made" that home. Arguably, that orbital lifestyle was the over-arching point of the masculine existence—to gather by whatever means necessary the material resources needed to make a home, (as it still is today; men have very basic material needs relative to their earning capacity, their excess earning capacity being suited to providing the excess material needs to finance the making of a home). And this (it seems to me and I don't know how anyone could seriously argue the point) became and remains the ideal environment in which to rear children: it has the stability of reliable, incoming resources (provided by the husband/father/breadwinner) to sustain it and the stability of the focal point (provided by the wife/mother/homemaker) to provide the ideal "nest" for the rearing of their offspring. One person in charge of gathering the necessary resources, the other person taking those resources and making a home for the father/husband, the mother/wife and their children.*

This is not rocket science nor is it sexist propaganda nor patriarchal oppression, despite the best efforts of masculine women to try and portray it as such. This is basic life stuff. This is genuine normalcy. I see no need to append, "in my opinion" to this (given its predominance in the animal kingdom and its predominance—apart from the degradation of the last thirty years—in human history).

I maintain that what is missing in our degraded feminist society is that Word: the perception that without the focal point of the homemaker within the orbital structure, there IS no structure. TWO Spirits going out and gathering dust can gather a lot of dust—certainly more than one Spirit alone. But they aren't "orbiting" anything. There is no fixed environment with one of them at its center. Two spirits gathering dust don't have a home, they have a house and there's a world of difference between the two. This is compounded with children. In a two-parents-working environment, the children don't have a home in any meaningful sense of the term. Instead, it seems to me, they live in their parents' house. *It's a purely material concept to which they adjust themselves. When both parents devote themselves (let's be frank here) to the acquisition of "stuff," the acquisition of "stuff" becomes life's only implicit point, and this implicit point is conveyed to their offspring. My room. My CD player. My clothes. How could it be otherwise? What other motivation do they see but acquisition and materialism for its own sake? Mummy can't stay home and play with you. Mummy has to go out and work so we can buy nice things. The implicit message is that "buying nice things" is more important than any conventional notion of parenting, family or home.*

The implicit message imparted by Working Mummy is that it is more important to have a house filled with nice things than to have a home with a homemaker in it.

(I'll leave aside the larger point that much of Working Mummy's acquisitiveness centers, not on working Mummy's family, but on acquiring nice things

for Working Mummy—a second car for Working Mummy to go to work in, a separate wardrobe of work clothes for Working Mummy, costs of daycare so Working Mummy can weasel out from under her maternal responsibilities: in the vast majority of cases, this will devour the lioness' share of Working Mummy's meagre contribution to the family finances)

Do you see what I'm saying? Without a wife-and-mother-homemaker to coalesce around, the concept of home vanishes and gets replaced by what we see in the world today: among other atrocities, childhood obesity because the children are coalescing around the only thing in their domestic environment that exhibits any life traits (that is, movement, colour and sound, however mechanical): television and video games. These approximations of "life" in their environment being fixed and stationary, the children become fixed and stationary before them. Stationary people become obese. When there is no home—merely a fruits-of-materialism-filled house owned by two interchangeably-gendered adults—there is nothing else to do but Eat and watch television. That—if I'm reading correctly between the lines of the profusion of "O, Woe is Us In Our Obesity" articles dominating the pages of the National Post*—is what life has become in the absence of a homemaker: Eating and watching television. A homemaker, it seems to me, at the very least, has the solid grounding in producing the daily family meal to serve as some sort of counter-weight to the boob tube. By contrast, the housewife who spends five days a week pretending to be man, drags her carcass into her house the same as everyone else. And does what everyone else does. Eats and watches television and calls that life.*

Ultimately, I got out of the rut myself, but I am fully aware that most of my memories of the first forty-five years of my life consists of comic books, television and pop music. A human being will find something to coalesce around if there isn't a home. In my case it was comic books. I was in the first generation of two-parents-working. You can't fool a kid. He needs something to be central in his life and he knows where his mother's heart is. For a period of time we had family mealtime Probably until I was about eleven or twelve. And then I just ate in front of the television The plain fact of the matter was that my mother's heart was at the schools she worked at and, to a lesser extent, with my father. She tried to pretend my father was more important to her than her job, but, ultimately, it was just pretend. And her children came third behind my father. I'm not bitter about it. Given my preferences in life, given those things that my life coalesced around (reading and collecting comic books and then writing and drawing comics books) there was for me, personally, no appreciable difference between "having a home" and "merely living in my parents' house."

Not having had a home from the time I was eleven or twelve was and is no big deal to me, nor do I think it is any big deal to most men. I'm far more interested in how the Leafs are doing and reading the newspaper than taking up an "orbital" lifestyle to provide the material resources for someone to make a home. I suspect that if my mother had been a full-time homemaker that that wouldn't be the case. I assume that I would miss having a home to such an extent that I would try to replicate the environment by getting married and having kids. If my own experience is anything to go by, the concept of "home" as far as men is concerned is mortally wounded and it will probably die within a generation or two. Sure, there's a difference between the meals that my mother cooked for us—even when we no long ate together as a family—and the meals I throw together or order out for myself. A big difference. I certainly miss real—as opposed to advertising-slogan—home-cooking. But, then I miss playing road hockey and probably will never play road hockey again for the rest of my life. In this day and age, the two have become comparable situations. When you grow up you stop getting home-cooked meals and you don't play road hockey anymore. I think I'll manage to muddle through somehow. Not having home-cooked meals and playing road hockey do not constitute a hardship. The Bataan Death March. That *was a hardship. The loss of the concept of home and family is just one of those things that the world happened to be ready for when I was growing up, so that was what happened. I'll take my own thing the world happened to be ready for over, say, the Black Death any day.*

But, as home becomes something that boys just outgrow—or in the case of the most recent generations, a thing they will never know in the first place—I think women will get progressively more and more fundamentally unhappy because I suspect that home always was far more their interest than it was men's. I remember one of my female relatives saying that if it wasn't for women, men would just eat pizza and drink beer and watch football on Christmas. I suspect I'm not the only one who thought, at the time, that that sounded like a not-half-bad idea compared with shopping, wrapping presents and making family chit-chat and tip-toeing around everyone's feminist sensibilities

Bottom line, Maria: if women want to go out and work and let the concept of home die over the next few generations, that's up to them. But I think it's worth considering that because women who would otherwise become homemakers are being pressured to go out into the workforce, everything has been tailored to the needs of busy "soccer moms"—from fitted sheets to single-portion, ready-to-eat dinners and from deli-style cooked chickens to pre-mixed salads—"close-enough-for-government-work" housekeeping. The hidden drawback for womankind, as I see it, is that what makes housekeeping easier for "soccer moms" also makes housekeeping easier for single or divorced men and, thus, a disincentive to marry or remarry. When it comes to the choice of retaining 50% of my own material goods and income or handing them over to a woman who—when she isn't putting in overtime at

work—does little more than empty the contents of plastic containers onto paper plates (or expects ME to empty the contents of plastic containers onto dinner plates when she gets home) calling it "dinner" ...well...forgive me for thinking that the bloom might off that particular rose (or that it, increasingly, will be) as a seductive lifestyle for self-respecting men. From what I have seen of the modern interchangeably-gendered, two-working- roommates-with-wedding-ring marriages, I don't think I'm missing anything (if I am, it's well hidden). But women, I believe, are. And that thing, I believe, is the essential concept of what a home is, of what a family is.

Ancillary to this, your "symmetrical equivalent," it seems to me, is largely illusory where it is not entirely fictitious. Men, I believe, know who and what they are. They know that real men, responsible men, go out and work. Men are breadwinners by nature, in direct descent from the Spirit of God moving on the face of the waters. There are, I'm sure, a certain number of "squishes" who can be talked (or, let us call a spade a spade, bullied*) into being Mr. Moms but they will never be anything but a miniscule minority. And a miniscule minority can never (whatever else they might be) be a symmetrical equivalent. The numbers are too asymmetrical for that. The vast numbers of women out in the working world, to me, bespeak either a nearly universal masculinity (hard to imagine actually being the case, but my gender has pretty well accepted it at face value) or a tyranny by masculine women over feminine women (who really don't want to go out and pretend to be men, but who also don't want to be "left out" of what all the other women are doing).*

2. Yes, what I was discussing was government—that is to say, taxpayer—funded daycare. As with anything else the government touches it gets very, very expensive in a hurry as the experiment in the province of Quebec with massive daycare subsidization has proven. The province is billions of dollars in the hole (and still digging) because it finances a $5-a-day universal daycare (which, as far as I know, has now been expanded outside of daycare, so that any woman in Quebec has the fundamental right to drop her kids off with the government anytime 24/7 and have them taken care of at a cost of $5). It is certainly possible *to expand the "volume of business," as you suggest, and have Soviet-style "Here is how we raise the Comrades" daycare—immense gulags full of pre-school-age children. Just as it is* possible *to start babies in pre-pre-pre-school at the age of six weeks and call it "early childhood development" because "baby-ditching"—that is, to call it what it is, allowing Mom can get her ass back to work in a hurry and make her babies someone else's problem as soon as possible—sounds desperately unflattering to today's modern woman. But, let us face facts: feminists, having deluded the general population of men in North America that women are a disadvantaged, oppressed minority (like black men),* ANYthing *is, at least ostensibly,* possible*. One has only to look at the lunatic policies of the Liberals and NDP in Canada and the Democrats in the United States to fully grasp the mind-boggling extremes of capitulation by men to feminist psychoses that are* possible *once one has crossed the Rubicon of seeing half the human population as a minority.*

(The fact that portraying themselves as minority was the first choice of feminists is, to me, profoundly self-revelatory of the actual under-pinning of feminism—the tyranny of masculine women over feminine women. Masculine women, I whole-heartedly concur, being a genuine societal minority—may it be God's will that their numbers shrink by the day!)

What we are discovering—on the cusp of same-sex marriage being legalized in this country—is that there is simply no societal self-abasement and self-degradation to which hand-wringing, pants-wetting white male liberals—in their monomaniacal and obsequious determination to make amends for our gender's historical "oppression" of the members opposite—will not stoop. There is simply no limit whatsoever to their sadomasochistic boot-licking that they won't gratefully embrace in order to satisfy what have proven to be (and what, in my view, will continue to prove to be) insatiable and bottomless feminist appetites for domination in all areas of society as we presently know it. Of course enacting legislation is a different kettle of fish entirely. The Liberals came to power in this country ten years ago promising universal taxpayer-financed daycare and still (thank God) nothing in sight. It's a multi-levelled feminist portrayal/deception. The feminists know that taxpayer-funded daycare is unworkable, but they will only vote for a party that promises the policy, even though they and the party know that it is never going to happen. Or if it is, the result will be massive deficits and crippling debt which are just going to cost everyone (at least) what individual daycare would have cost. Like most feminist policy it is folie a deux *on a grand scale. Like making the execution of unborn children into a human right. You better stick to the flat assertion because if you ever stop to actually consider the intellectual underpinnings of what your* opinion *of abortion actually constitutes and what it involves, I think, as a gender, you would go quite insane at the horror of it all.*

Your letter does remind me that the United States is one of the few countries which has (so far) avoided enmeshing government in the raising of children, but the slope between Aid to Families with Dependent Children; Subsidized Daycare and Soviet-style daycare gulags is a slippery and narrow defile to negotiate. Keep your eyes open. Here, but for the grace of God, go you.

I also take issue with the phrase "the mother who has been abandoned by her spouse." That presupposes that it is always, mostly or usually the man's fault if there is a split, a view which feminists have been very successful in imposing as a universal perception of

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reality. What about those instances where the spouse has been "driven away" because the mother is a terminal nutcase, secure in the knowledge that she can provoke him as much as she wants because if he walks, she gets half his stuff? I think it arguable that women are clinically insane and getting worse by the day and I think that, therefore, men who live with women are (to fall back on a psychiatric shorthand term in the interests of politeness) severely dissociated. I don't think either instance is healthy, per se, but I think both are inevitable in our present societal structure because, in our society, women—particularly mothers—are perceived to be always right. I say this with the authority of being the only individual who has been willing to openly disagree with them and with their feminist policies in toto and who has, as a result, been ostracized, ridiculed, slandered and denigrated. I've said this time and again: men have two choices in our society, capitulate or leave. Since the capitulation involves capitulation to clinical insanity, it seems to me that leaving is the only rational course of action

Society, in general, it seems to me, would benefit far more from women being reared to be the homemakers their "womb-nature" most disposes them towards rather than those normal womb-natured women being force-fed by masculine women the feminist ideology that holds that it is only when a woman is imitating masculine lifestyles that she has any value. Failing that, I think it only fair to point out to a twenty-year-old girl (while you are force-feeding her your masculine feminist ideology) that her odds of finding the man of her dreams drop exponentially around the age of thirty and that—if she chooses to devote her life to imitating masculine lifestyles—the odds of making a successful marriage are far more remote than if she chooses to be feminine. As, indeed, is the case with romantic relationships at any age. Teaching your daughters to beat the crap out of little boys either metaphorically or literally is not going to endear them to the potential husbands (fading hope, but still there) those little boys will one day become. It seems to me, as well, that collectivist self-examination by women of their innate bitchiness and the degree to which that bitchiness makes them insufferable to be around and what their innermost motives actually are in choosing to celebrate that bitchiness as some high estate of achievement and to inculcate bitchiness in their daughters—and how that innate, insufferable bitchiness and the celebration of it figures centrally in their inability to maintain lasting relationships with men—would be worthwhile. And I mean an examination of the bitchiness itself—as I say, the innate female nature implied by the very term bitchiness (which, in my experience, does a grave disservice to female dogs)—and not just another three decades worth of tedious recitation of psychiatric and pseudo-medical jargon inventions like PMS, low self-esteem, low blood sugar, Attention Deficit Disorder, Post-Partum Depression, Post Partum Psychosis, and other manufactured euphemisms which invariably allow new definitions for bitchiness while somehow alleviating the obligation to do anything to correct them apart from saying, "Okay, I admit it I'm a bitch," which is the nearest any women I know come to doing anything about their bitchiness. Which is to say, nowhere close. And for everything not covered by such pseudo-scientific jargon, to have a "standing bitch policy" to just blame men or the patriarchy.

And, to a large degree, I think women should learn to avoid the sort of scapegoat implication—such as you suggest—that it is the fault of the government that public assistance is not enough for a woman to live on. I live in a province which experimented with making Welfare enough to live on and it took a number of years for the Conservative government of Mike Harris to cut the resultant $11 billion deficit back to something manageable and to keep Ontario from becoming a socialist destination of choice for societal freeloaders. Teaching inherently bitchy, unemployable and unliveable women that they are entitled to a living wage from the government simply because they have given birth, is a step in the wrong direction for any society.

In my view.

3. I think you, like most women, misunderstand the limited contribution which the female makes to an embryo with her 23 chromosomes. I think the evidence suggests that women provide the "back end of the horse," primarily the legs. Men who are born "intersexuals"—with two X (female) chromosomes as well as a Y (male) chromosome— invariably have longer legs. I'm not saying I would want to try living without my legs, but if it came to a choice between the bottom half of my body and the top half of my body, it would be no contest. There are many traits that women pass on to their unborn babies, but the most valuable of those traits originate with the masculine chromosomes Women can be carriers of masculine chromosomal traits, but I don't think the evidence supports in any way that masculine chromosomal traits originate with women. Arguably, the only idiosyncratic female nature of human value that women provide to the chromosomal "soup" and which originated with women is the "nesting" instinct peculiar to their own gender, the urge to make every environment in which they find themselves into a surrogate womb.

[As indicated in my previous answer, this is, indeed, a valuable trait and a thing to be encouraged in the greatest number of women—while making the same allowances for masculine women that are made for feminine men. That is, a woman who is so inherently masculine that she feels compelled to abandon her womb nature, her nesting self and adopt the masculine role and go out and work (i.e. foraging) should be encouraged to do so if only because her presence among feminine women is going to be inherently disruptive and distracting in and to their more natural feminine homemaker development. Likewise a feminine man who wants to be a homemaker He should be

encouraged to do so and leave other men to develop into their more natural masculine working selves. But in neither case, in my opinion, should that perversion be encouraged, as it is in our society, as a "new normalcy" or as a state of existence which will occur as frequently as the normal feminine state or the normal masculine state if all gender distinctions are eliminated. We have spent thirty years stacking the deck in favour of that view and I don't think the results, to say the least, validate the premise]

Given the limited female contribution to the embryo, I think it only sensible that all men be consulted about the disposition of the unborn foetus which they themselves implanted within that given woman. If genuine fairness is to be achieved relative to the respective contributions to the foetus, I think women should only have control over the foetus' legs and be permitted to decide which babies are to be born with legs and which babies are to be born double amputees. The men impart the seed, women are just the box the seed grows in.

Of course to me the larger question is, "What happens to the soul *of an aborted foetus?" This leads to the next point.*

4. Yes, exactly. And yet, how seldom is that acknowledged? How often is it even presented as part of the question—given the inherent level of ignorance human beings bring to the equation. Does a foetus have a soul? When does the soul enter the foetus? What is the effect upon one's own soul in authorizing the destruction of the soul of another? If a man stands idly by while his unborn child is vacuumed out of some woman's womb and dumped in a trash receptacle, what is his own level of culpability on Judgement Day? If the soul doesn't enter the foetus until after it is born, then, arguably, murdering a foetus is no more a crime than having a cyst removed. But, which is it?

It seems obvious to me, given that we don't even have the beginnings of answers to those questions, that...

...what? "Tie goes to the runner"?

Is it sensible to have as our societal policy—given that we don't know any of the relevant answers—to just say that it's all okay? No harm, no foul? But the central point is that we don't know what the foul is, although it seems to me that the harm is self-evident. It's lying in the trash receptacle over there. And what "progress" do the masculine women make from there? If Liberal MP Dr. Carolyn Parrish is anything to go by, the next step is to authorize stem cell research on aborted foetuses because, quote "they're just going in the trash anyway."

Here's one I feel no need to attach "in my opinion" to: if we could go back in time to the legislative debates surrounding women's suffrage and retroactively present to our forefathers a small sampling of these sorts of gruesome, lunatic extrapolations as what they are: the implicit societal result of giving women the right to vote, can you doubt for one minute that women would never have been enfranchised? And, a more pernicious thought even than that: I think I'm safe in saying that an individual, a hundred years ago, presenting to our forefathers the idea that giving women the right to vote would lead in a few generations to a female Member of Parliament advocating just such a sickening "waste not, want not" approach to the disposition of aborted foetuses, that individual would have been accused of being mentally unbalanced, anti-woman and ghoulishly and excessively morbid in even suggesting that any woman could hold, let alone enunciate such a view.

And yet, here we are.

And the views of MP Dr. (Doctor!) Carolyn Parrish aren't considered ghoulish or excessively alarmist. They're considered to be good, sound, Liberal-feminist public policy. Don't throw that foetus away—put it in your recycle box and let's all get some use out of it!

5 At the risk of being uncharitable, Maria, Robert wouldn't break wind unless you told him it was okay to do so. I mean no offence against either of you in saying that. That sounds disingenuous, but I sincerely don't. It's just that the core issues presented by feminism can only be addressed accurately in what sounds like an intentionally insulting fashion. Instead, it is, in my view, simply the net effect of liberal-minded men having been accused of oppressing women as a societal minority. No husband, in a real sense, in this day and age, would break wind without asking his wife's permission. This seems like a marriage of equals to women, it seems to me, because women are self-absorbed and power-mad.

There is, in my view and my experience and my observation, no such thing as a marriage of equals.

I have seen a lot of marriages and I participated in one myself. The men do as they're told because they know that nothing is worth dealing with innate female bitchiness and clinical insanity which results from not *doing what they're told. Innate bitchiness so blinds women to their own nature that they see their marriages as being the conjoining of equal partners, when what they have, in actual fact, is the cohabitation of the (on her part)* definer *of their jointly accepted reality and the (on his part)* capitulator *to that jointly accepted reality.*

Capitulate or leave. Up to now, I think most men have capitulated. I think there is a growing trend towards leaving. I think that trend will become a worldwide stampede before women take the first step towards arresting their inherent bitchiness which, in my considered view, is the implicit cause of that growing trend towards leaving.

I do hope, for the sake of society overall the home and the family as societal institutions—that it will not be too late when women finally decide to act upon (and, more to the point, against*) their own worst nature. But, I'm largely convinced it will be. Too late, I mean. And I think there is no question that it will*

have to be the women who will have to act. Feminists, having immobilized the men (by implying that men are oppressive tyrants by nature) have eliminated even the remotest possibility of any husband or boyfriend taking any action against feminism. Even my own advocacy of anti-feminism is universally viewed as misogyny by women. Which view, in itself, further facilitates the oppressive feminist tyranny all men in our Western feminized society presently labour under: because Dave Sim doesn't capitulate, Dave Sim is a misogynist. Men take note. You could share Dave Sim's fate if you don't capitulate. They don't want to share my fate, so they capitulate (eat your heart out, Johnnie Cochrane). It's a poisonous structure. Women built it, women are the sole beneficiaries of it, women will have to dismantle it.

But, as I say, I think it's already too late.

6. You evade my point nicely. There are many "for women only" athletic clubs. Why is that? Why does that inequality exist in an age when the last few "men only" environments have been coerced or bludgeoned into becoming co-ed? It seems to me that the reason is that men don't want to join "for women only" athletic clubs. Men don't want to go anywhere that women coagulate amongst themselves, they never have and they never will. The only exception to that hard and fast rule is if we could turn ourselves invisible: a girls' locker room would be high on our list of tourist destinations. But, even blinded by your own feminism, I think you should be able to see the difference: i.e. You will never see men picketing a lesbian bookstore demanding that they be represented therein, either as customers, clerks or authors.

Men are at an unfair advantage in that regard because no woman can stand any environment being "for men only". Even in your own example, journalist access to locker-rooms at sporting events. From time immemorial, sports reporters have gone into locker rooms. Now, because of feminism, you want that admission restricted unless women are allowed in, as well. Can't you see (forgive my bluntness) how infantile you're being? "If I can't come in, NO ONE can come in"? Forgive my even greater bluntness.

Grow.

Up.

Look, I'm going to agree with you on the boys'- and girls'-only private schools. But I will bet you dollars to donuts that if it comes about, inside of five years your gender will be breaking down the doors of the boys' schools to force them to let girls in, whereas men, five years from now, ten years from now, fifty years from now, will always be delighted that there exist any number of "women only" environments. Anywhere that women coagulate with their own demented kind, however temporarily, even for an hour or two means that somewhere there are boyfriends and husbands who are actually able to watch sports or read a newspaper without being interrupted by inane gossip and other forms of female nattering.

But, not so with the members opposite. To feminists, the grass is always greener on the boys' side of the fence.

And, of course, it is.

But that's because boys are generally nicer people and more interesting people than are girls (only a homosexual *male would be accused of bitchiness. It's a female trait. Not a male trait.)*

Or as the pertinent riddle goes. "Q. Why do girls have breasts and vaginas?" "A: So boys will talk to them."

7. You're not just evading my point here, you're missing it entirely. You, that is, women are very late arrivals to the job market. Until we entered our current age of feminist lunacy, men had jobs. There were jobs for women (which I think was a mistake, the thin end of the feminist wedge): secretary, nurse, school teacher. Everything worked fine. Now, you have unilaterally decided that you are entitled to half of all jobs. Affirmative action is discrimination. Period. You can use pseudo-scientific jargon (where would feminism be without it?) like "past biased hiring patterns" if you want and think that the fact that it sounds vaguely like scientific terminology will shelter you from having to perceive reality accurately, but I can flip it the other way and say what you are actually *talking about doing—through affirmative action—is replacing* alleged *"past biased hiring patterns" with* implicit *"present biased hiring patterns." Poof. Bye-bye pseudo-scientific jargon as cover. Hello, Maria's intellectual nakedness (eeek!)*

8. Well, good. We finally agree on one. Except for the pseudo-scientific jargon of "communication skills". You—and by that I mean feminists—keep trying to enlarge basic simple concepts into grandiose scientific theorems by using jargon. "Communications skills." You mean the ability to talk people into things they don't want to do by leaning on them with the implication that they could be absorbing the full brunt of your inherent bitchiness if they don't see things your way? "Communication skills" is a nice way of putting that. There are a lot more apt—and much less nice—ways of describing what that is.

∎

*9. Feminists always have to fall back on quotas and demographics because they know that if hiring was based on merit—*actual *merit,* masculine-scale *merit—most of you wouldn't have a snowball's chance in hell in colleges, job opportunities, housing, or anywhere else.*

If "affirmative action is not necessary in this area," then I assume that you will, in the interests of fairness, be taking an active role in seeing that it's removed as the universal guideline/premise/infrastructure for college enrolment. Of course, I also assume that pigs will fly out of my butt any minute now.

Can't you understand that the number of women who apply is irrelevant? As irrelevant as the number of women there are in society vis-à-vis the number of women enrolled in colleges in that society? A college is supposed to have standards. If you, as an applicant, exceed those standards by a sufficient margin, you should, in any fair society, be entitled to a place in that college. Black, white, woman, man, gay, straight, talking penguin, disadvantaged crustacean. All that should matter are your marks. If that means no talking penguins and no women this year, then that means no talking penguins (sorry, Opus) and no women—Until. They. Have. High. Enough. Marks. · *Any other approach is inherently, self-evidently, inescapably*

Un.

Fair.

10. Unfortunately—and I can see the school teacher in you coming out here—you are setting yourself up as arbiter. If you could just leave it as is: "In a public or work environment, no one should feel humiliated or embarrassed of their sexuality (or race, color or religion) as a result of the way someone talks about them," that would be fine. I would agree with you 100%. In a perfect world, no one should *experience either humiliation or embarrassment. But, people do. Try being an anti-feminist and believing in God in the comic-book field if you want people to actively attempt to humiliate you and to attempt to make you feel embarrassed as a way of life. You—and this is where you set yourself up as arbiter—seem to think you're justified in wanting someone punished for being the* perceived *cause of someone else's humiliation and embarrassment. Most times I think people who purport to feel humiliated or embarrassed are either being (tactically) overly sensitive or (more often) they deserve to be humiliated and embarrassed because what they are saying is so fundamentally at odds with basic human rights like free speech that they should be exposed to as much possible public ridicule as can be directed at them until they are forced to recognize the self-evident distinction between an opinion—no one should be allowed to make them feel bad—and a fact—everyone is entitled to express his or her own opinion whatever perceived emotional harm that may cause to another individual. In my view, the reason that feminists want "being humiliated or embarrassed" made into federal offences is because feminists know that as their "movement" comes unravelled, there's going to be more than enough humiliation and embarrassment to go around for the thirty-plus years you've been driving society around in this tight little cul de sac of yours. Why is it that the rule "tie goes to the runner" never works in favour of those of us who think these permanently aggrieved victims are being overly sensitive? Particularly in the academic world: If anyone complains that they've been made to feel uncomfortable, haul the accused before a board of inquiry and get the entire board to use their "Communication skills" on them until they limp out of the room like a flattened pancake*

Likewise your phrase, "In a public arena it is inappropriate." It would be fine if you people wanted to just make pristine, immaculate little environments of your own and for your exclusive collectivist use where every utterance could be measured on a group-think "appropriateness" scale and you could all just hunker down and take each other's temperature and wring your hands and wet your pants and nail the backs of your hands to your foreheads 24/7. But, unfortunately, that never seems to be the case. You want your preferred environment to be the preferred environment for everyone. No matter what anyone else may prefer. "This is what is appropriate in a public environment." "This is what is not appropriate in a public environment." Not "This is what I BELIEVE is appropriate." Maria, let me ask you this: who died and made you queen?

As I say, I am being led inescapably to the conclusion that you people are clinically insane. And what's worse, you're the ones teaching our society's children!

11 & 12 You can say that alimony is rarely paid nowadays. I am very familiar with this feminist tactic. If there's an unpleasant or inconvenient truth, then just say it isn't true or just say that it hasn't been true since the 1980s, or say "that was a parody article in The Onion," *or use some other flat assertion to substitute your delusion for self-evident reality.*

But, it IS true

Alimony IS being paid. Enormous amounts of money. Just look at your answer to number 12. Can you not understand your problem with perceiving reality accurately when you deny in point 11 that alimony exists and then in point 12 assert that it's the only fair way to settle the termination of a marriage?

Or is this some kind of feminist word game? Alimony sounds bad, so we'll call it a property settlement, instead? Just how much do you suppose a $20,000-a-year stewardess can contribute to the "physical and emotional well-being of a baseball player"? Evidently, you—without batting an eye—can cheerfully see her contribution as being to the tune of $3 mil a year. That's a lot of physical and emotional well-being, in my books.

In fact, it sounds to me more a lot more like astronomically exorbitant retroactive prostitution

13. "The opinion of the person most directly involved with the care of the child is usually the most valid opinion as long as the parent/guardian is not dysfunctional." In that case, you're talking about the day-care supervisor and/or the school teacher, because they are definitely logging a lot more hours than the mothers are. It seems to me that this appeals mightily to the school teacher in you. I would hope that it would repel you as a mother, but clearly it doesn't. I suspect you are at or near the "tipping point" that my mother

came to where her work came first and her family came a distant second. It seems like a long way off, now, Maria, but your co-workers are not going to be around when you hit retirement age. Only Robert, your children and what friendships you have maintained outside of work. If you aren't actively building something there, making your home Robert's and your children's home, it's going to seem very empty, I can assure you—even with them in it—if you have invested your most of your heart and soul elsewhere. Co-workers are not family. Just as—except in the case of a genuine family business—family should not be co-workers. Co-workers are co-workers and family is family.

"However, if one of the parents sacrifices his/her own career to stay home with the child, the other parent assumes a greater share of the financial responsibility for the greater good of the family." Well, as Ronald Reagan said to Jimmy Carter, there you go again. You take it as a given that both parents have a career. A woman staying home and rearing her children and making a home for them isn't just doing what, in my view, is her basic God-given nature: to you she's "sacrificing her career." And you still believe that it is just as likely, just as sensible that a man would do so.

As I say, I hope your gender changes its collective mind on these ludicrous skewed perceptions of reality before it's too late, but I definitely consider that highly unlikely.

14. And once again, I'm sure you would consider yourself an appropriate final arbiter of who is and who isn't anti-woman or a misogynist.

15. And discipline, *the meaning of and with which, in my experience, feminists are entirely unfamiliar and are, therefore, incapable of administering. Discipline is man's work.*

I also think it worth pointing out that children who are raised in a daycare or nanny context or by substitute parents are going to experience a "disconnect" from their biological mothers and will implicitly become the progeny (by any rational measure) of their daycare supervisor, nanny or substitute parent OR (I suspect is more likely) will effectively raise themselves and will, as a consequence, tend away from marriage and procreation.

16. With all due respect, Maria, if our "discussion" was anything to go by, I don't think you've listened to a word anyone has said to you since you were a teenager—unless they were telling you that you're right—without interrupting to contradict them before they have finished speaking—least of all Robert. Again, no offence intended against either of you. Robert can't say anything to you because of the societal structure which demands that men capitulate to the view that our entire gender is guilty of the same sort of oppression and suppression which whites inflicted upon blacks—or that they leave. It seems clear to me that—because Robert obviously loves you—he's chosen to capitulate, as all husbands are required to do. I can tell you a hard truth because—not only don't I love you, I don't even like you particularly or think of you outside of your chosen feminist context. Because your opinion of me—as is the case with any opinion which any woman holds of me—could not, under any circumstances, matter less to me. I haven't the faintest motivation to get on your—or any other feminist's—"good side". I have no more of a stake in the collective or individual fortunes and opinions of Today's Woman than I have in the price of rutabagas on Guam. I offer you instead, completely dispassionate and measured assessments of "where you're at". You wouldn't trust the opinions of a self-involved sycophant beholden to his own vested interests in a political context, why would you believe your "caught-in-the-feminist-nutcracker" husbands instead of me?

Think about it.

Your end points:

It remains to be seen whether this is, as you say, actually a unique point of view that I have. Just because feminists have silenced all opposition—except my own—that doesn't mean that that opposition doesn't exist. Your presupposition that what is at stake here is my problem and not your own, to me, speaks ominous volumes about the feminist nature. I, as well, could ask—if I was as intellectually- and tactically-evasive by nature as feminists are—what personal traumas YOU suffered that have made you so deaf to dissenting viewpoints and have rendered you incapable of differentiating between an irrefutable fact and a political opinion. But, given my interest in perceiving reality accurately, I'm not a person who hides behind the implicit evasions of trauma theory. I have chosen to be the person I am, and I take full responsibility for all of my own choices. You have chosen to be the person you are.

If your gender continues to adhere to the view that what is needed (for someone like myself—who dissents from feminist lunacy) is to "meet the right person," and to adhere, further, to the view that anyone who thinks, as I do, that feminists are misguided and leading our society deeper and deeper into a quagmire ONLY thinks that way because he went through a bad relationship or two, I can only say that, in my opinion, all you are accomplishing through your wilful evasiveness of reality is to roll the snowball of your gender's collective hubris—already gargantuan and (quite possibly) already outside of your control—down a steeper and more densely-packed slope.

If it comes to a question of who is living on a mountaintop in a materialist sense, I will offer the fact that all of my clothes—winter, summer, spring and fall wardrobes—fit in twenty-four inches of closet space (apart from six sweaters and six pairs of black jeans). I own a bed, a chair, a half-sized fridge, one bowl, one

dinner plate, one fork, two spoons, a coffee mug and four glasses and I live in a 9x12 room. If you are referring to a mountaintop of rigorous self-discipline and self-denial in the interests of personal improvement, I plead guilty as charged. I will avoid addressing your comparing me to the Unabomber as unworthy of a Christian woman (although I will file it away with Sook-Yin Lee's comparison of Cerebus *to* Mein Kampf *as the latest example of feminist hysteria in the face of dissenting political viewpoints and simple divergences from lock-step Marxist-feminist "group-think").*

To me, it's not a matter of "taking a risk" on a relationship. Risks I can handle (I offer twenty-six years as a self-publisher as evidence). The feminist *structure of society and the* feminist *permeation of family law (I'll say "to me" but I think this is far closer to irrefutable fact than to an opinion) constitute a "lose-lose" situation for men. Like being told that the only number you can bet on is "red 12" when the roulette wheel has no "red 12" on it. The fact that most men, presented with that situation, will choose to bet on "red 12" only a handful of times ("Five thousand more, Dave, and I'm giving up") does not convince me that betting on a non-existent number is a sensible lifestyle choice.*

Likewise with your adherence to the view of deadbeat husbands being the source of societal malaise. Clearly, even as the movement away from marriage on the part of men gains momentum in each succeeding generation, as more and more men grow weary of your gender's self-righteousness and flat assertions and decides that ANY price—however unfair and however exorbitant—is worth paying to get the hell away from you and that the majority of current marriages (not your parents' marriage, not your grandparents' marriage) end in the first few years, still you never once consider that the fault might be your own, that, as a gender, since 1970 you have become ever more insufferable, intolerant, blind, deaf, shrill, strident and (though it beggars the imagination to contemplate) ever more aggrieved in your largely fictitious, largely tactical victim-hood.

I'm sure those young boys wish that their fathers were active in their lives. I'm sure the fathers wish they were active in their boys' lives. But (and, again, it takes a dispassionate outside observer to point this out) in a feminist-dominated world, where women like yourselves see yourselves and have made of yourselves the final arbiters of all matters concerning children AND concerning men, I would venture the opinion that there is no place *for fathers in the lives of their sons except under* (exponentially!) *increasingly feminized terms. And I would venture the opinion that those non-negotiable and Draconian feminist terms—being completely at odds with, diametrically opposed to and wholly anathematic to anything resembling, in whole or in part, genuine masculinity—are simply unacceptable to anyone but a complete and total squish. A squish—faced with a context where he is implicitly deemed to be tyrannical, patriarchal and oppressive because of his gender—can really only capitulate. Even when he knows that what he is capitulating to is the view that his son is better off being raised to be a girl than being raised to be a man. A real man finds submission to that brand of inherent falsehood, gender apartheid and inherent and implicit ideological emasculation unacceptable options. There is no "carrot" big enough to outweigh the implied "stick"*

However, all that having been said, let us not forget that you win.

You win.

I told your gender that you won nine years ago at the end of issue 186. Nothing has changed since then. As a society, we're just nine years further along and, in my view, worse off than we were in 1994. It's becoming increasingly apparent that your gender's not happy about it. And you want someone to blame because it's all gone terribly wrong somehow. But...you feminists win.

So, now that you've won, Maria.

Now what?

I asked that at the end of issue 186 and your gender still doesn't have any answer but the one you had at the time: more of the same. Well, okay. But don't blame MY gender. Those of us who have had enough and have decided to stay divorced or stay single have gotten as far out of your gender's way as we can because we know that no matter what we do, we are the ones who are going to be blamed for whatever your gender has brought, continues to bring and (so far as I can see) intends to continue to bring down upon its own collectivist heads and ours as well. Don't bother going through the evasive feminist pretence of "discussing it" with your hollowed-out ventriloquist puppet husbands As I say, they've capitulated—they wouldn't say "shit" if they had a mouth full. So, the question remains the same and your gender's alone to answer:

Now what?

My end point:

There was an article published in the National Post *4 October of this year. A full-page article entitled "Period. Full Stop," written under the pseudonym Ute Ross (so we know it wasn't written by a comedienne, anyway). This was the sort of article that, presumably, men don't read (the authoress quite snidely says so in the piece itself—it's a centerpiece of feminist journalism to take a cheap shot at those of my gender, like myself, who do, in the interests of greater understanding of the members opposite, read feminist journalism) because it deals with female "plumbing" in a very explicit fashion, written by a woman who has just undergone a hysterectomy. This woman, evidently, was one of those—exalted by your gender in story, song and legend—who actually broke through the glass ceiling and became a Bay Street (the Canadian equivalent of Wall Street) vice-president.*

Anyway, what drew me to clip the article out and

save it was "Manuscript Ross'" writing about her period in her forties. The part where she says that

> It gets longer, explosive and violently red and black for no particular reason. Standing up after sitting at my desk for an hour becomes a risk: Can I make it to the washroom before my Super Tampax, Maxi-Pad and yes, plastic pants for those really bad days, buckle to the deluge?
>
> One day at work, I stand and cups of jet-black blood (think of grape Jell-O, slightly set after an hour in the fridge) drills through my expensive Theory suit on to my upholstered chair. The janitor comes. I mumble incoherent apologies while he slashes the seat with a penknife ("so no one uses it") and wheels my wet chair away to the service elevator. I tie my jacket around my waist and go home squishily.

She goes on to discuss her ambivalence about having a hysterectomy to correct the condition because hysterectomies can bring on osteoporosis, urinary incontinence, mood swings, loss of femininity *(emphasis mine) and loss of sexual appetite.*

> I knew the risks, and it is too early to know whether I will eventually look like a man, pee when I sneeze and have a lousy sex life. I hope not

The punch-line, after her hysterectomy:

> I am now firmly in menopause. For a week or two, I feel no different—no hot flashes or mood swings. Then suddenly, hot flashes roll over me a dozen times a day. My face turns red, a sensation much like anxiety floods me, and there are visible beads of sweat on my forehead and upper lip as I rip off any clothes exceeding the minimum social requirement. And I am horrified to see my already diminutive bust veer into AA territory.
>
> Dr. S explains that the intravenous estrogen they were feeding me in the hospital must be wearing off. I ask for a prescription before I am compelled to a) kill someone or b) wear an undershirt
>
> I will be fine

How resistant can someone be to self-examination on whether or not a woman trying to live like a man is the right way to go? How resistant can someone be to considering that they have made the wrong lifestyle choice? If none of these experiences on the part of "Ute Ross" provokes any greater level of self-examination than "I will be fine," *what will the next generation of women have to see jetting out of their nether regions before they consider that God might be telling them something?*

Little black maggots, maybe?

And (while I'm on the subject) what obligation do these masculine-feminist over-achievers feel relative to girls in their teens and twenties who want to be "just like them when they grow up"? Is there no part of the feminist psyche that will allow of the fact that when black blood is jetting out of them and their bosoms are disappearing into their chests and they are being consumed by internal (infernal?) combustion that it might be a wee small sign that something, spiritually, is amiss? That this is what breaking through the glass ceiling will ACTUALLY be like? And that succeeding generations of women might benefit from a cautionary note or two being sounded? What about the exponential increase in incidents of breast cancer (which, if one reads female journalism as extensively as I do, one finds lurking between the lines of many a terror-stricken feminist passage)? When did these circumstances come about? If breast cancer is increasing at an exponential and alarming rate, when did it begin to do so? Might I hazard a guess? 1970, anyone? What about the vast numbers of stillbirths and SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome) mortality among babies, entirely inexplicable to medical science. Post Roe v. Wade, ca. 1973, anyone? Or what about the fact that recent studies show that women face roughly twice the likelihood of developing lung cancer than do men and that this is the reverse of the situation as it stood in 1974, constituting a four-fold increase in the female risk factor, a four-fold increase which scientists are completely unable to account for, even theoretically. My own best assessment? God is not mocked. And feminists are now reaping what they have sown in their three-decade long effort to mock God.

If none of you in the ranks of female feminists have considered this before...

[Which I suspect you haven't: keeping the self-evident reality—that women are intended to be women and not to be ersatz men—hidden from yourselves in much the way that gays, evidently, chose to whistle past the "gay cancer" graveyard for the period of years between when AIDS first emerged (1981) and when medical science finally forced them to recognize that it was "free-will-chosen-behaviour" related (to coin my own pseudo-scientific term) (1984). "Heading off at the pass" your knee-jerk M a r x i s t-feminist-homosexualist reaction: I don't think AIDS is God's judgement on homosexuals, per se, and I don't believe SIDS, explosive black menstruation and exponentially rising breast and lung cancer rates are God's judgement on feminists, per se. But I do believe that there are a number of implicit boundaries that God, in His infinite wisdom—knowing and anticipating all potential behaviours of each of His creations as the potter knows his clay—"hard-wired" into the human biological machinery. As long as homosexuals kept their indulgence in their chosen perversions to semi-reasonable limits—which would seem to have been the case prior to 1981—the "hard-wiring" didn't kick in, and I would

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imagine there are mitigating circumstances on an individual basis (a gay who donates a large portion of his income to the local food bank or who is otherwise conscientious and responsible as a counterbalance to his chosen vice). But, conversely, once you have—as was described to me by a homosexual one-time roommate of Deni's brother, Michael—multi-level bathhouses in New York City in the 70's which are "ankle deep in shit, blood and come"—then, yes, I believe God's "hard-wiring" kicks in. And, it seems to me, homosexuals have had to learn a very, very painful decades-long lesson about where "out of bounds" is. It seems to me that God—through exactly this design in the "hard-wiring" of His creations—gives to all who are tempted by the notion of mocking-Him-as-lifestyle the solemn (and, I suspect, somewhat wry) reassurance: Oh, don't worry about how far is too far. Believe Me, you'll know it when you get there.

Far-fetched? Black blood jetting out of you and your bosoms disappearing back into your chests is completely unrelated to imitating men and abandoning home and family for career? Perhaps. No question, it is your choice to make and it is your reality to interpret or ignore at your own discretion (or lack of same). As it was the choice of homosexuals to see just how...overt and loathsome?...they could make their behaviour in the licentious 60s and 70s. As I'm sure they, likewise, all reassured each other between 1981 and 1984 that "gay cancer" was completely random, so, hey, party 'til you puke, right?]

...having accepted that you, personally, are going to assume the risk implied in using your free will to choose to actively exceed previously observed boundaries of female behaviour: If *you're only choosing to increase* your own *risk of breast cancer or lung cancer or poisoning your own uterus, hey, they're* your *breasts and* your *lungs and* your *uterus, right? Quite right you are, in my view, and I couldn't agree more with your fundamental right to make that free will choice.*

However (to return to my earlier point):

What about the daughters that your gender is, collectively, fast-tracking onto a collision course with the glass ceiling? Do you have any obligation at all to strike a cautionary note with them? You know, now that I've introduced the possibility here? Or is your pervasive ersatz-masculine Marxist-feminist ideology so obsessive, so all-consuming, so monomaniacal that it DEMANDS that ALL girls MUST be pushed towards careers even if it exponentially increases the likelihood of cups of black blood jetting out of them and having their breasts amputated or retreating into their chests in their forties or being consumed from within by the ravages of lung cancer? And that no contrary opinion or suggestion can be allowed to interfere with everyone marching in lock-step to feminism's programmatic dictates? How high must the female organ cancer rates soar before you allow even of the possibility *that 1970 represented a wrong turn? Not even to grant it as a likelihood (given the sheer pig-headed-stubbornness exhibited by feminists I know we're years, if not decades away from that happening), but to simply allow for it as a possibility? Or that feminism—not men's reaction to feminism, but the inherently skewed nature of feminism itself—is to blame for the exponential rise in the number of failed marriages post-1970?*

If that is the case—that the future lives, future health and potential for marital happiness of ALL young girls must needs be sacrificed on the altar of your generation's brand of monomania, then feminism becomes, rather, an altogether inhuman and ruthless sort of ideology—quite like the totalitarian Marxism which gave birth to it, wouldn't you say?

You have a nice day, now, Maria. And thanks for writing. Say "hi" to Robert for me.

* * * * * * *

Dave,

I've been reading Cerebus for going on 20 years but this is my first letter (and last ditch effort to be in the letters page) to you because it took you this long to talk about golf, one thing I do know well (as opposed to why Canada is sleeping, feminism, Marxism, or hollowed out puppets). I've never understood those topics well enough to know whether or not you were completely on target or just an "evil misogynist." Well, with what I saw and read over the summer in regards to Annika Sorenstam, I now have a pretty clear understanding as to where you're coming from. The practice of making arguments purely about emotion rather then the REAL, hard facts of a situation was something to behold.

Over the years I've read your essays and have absorbed what I've felt is useful into my worldview. I have seen myself as the momma's boy or as a misguided feminist male many a time. Through it all I always had one thing in mind when I read your essays; the importance of competitive sport (or just plain competition; chess, checkers... whatever) in a man's life. Although in many ways I'm your typical comic book nerd, I've been fortunate to excel at sports, specifically baseball and golf. As I get older and the opportunities for competition lessen, the retreat into watching professional sports is a very real thing. I'm chompin' at the bit for the NFL to start.

But I want to elaborate on the Annika issue. Maybe give you an even better understanding as to its ridiculousness.

Annika Sorenstam would NEVER win a PGA tour event. She may never even fairly qualify. I'm not so sure she could even crack the top 75 in a 72-hole event, assuming she made the cut. The fact that other LPGA players were stating that "if given more chances" they felt that Annika could compete and even win an event was the very definition of delusional. It's completely comical that an LPGA player has such a severe misunderstanding of the man's game. I mean, I can expect a moronic member of the media "looking for an angle"

to write an article talking about how Annika could compete or even win a PGA event, but another pro? Just unbelievable really.

As a baseball fan you know that, above all else, baseball is a numbers game. Over the course of a season the teams with the best stats (team e.r.a., team fielding percentage, team batting average) are generally the teams in the playoffs (but, never underestimate teams with phenom pitchers like Mark Prior...er, uh, go Cubs!).

Golf is THE numbers game. Let's break it down on the golf course.

The drive. The golf media was gushing over how Annika was averaging 270 yards off the tee, "only 30 yards worse than Tiger's season average" even though he wasn't playing in the event. Well, that's only part of the equation. 270 yards is a good distance but the current winners on the PGA tour are averaging well over 300 yards. And, her 270 yards is more a result of technology than anything. When she gets up on the tee she's trying to just hit the crap out of the ball with a draw (right or left ball flight with top spin) that will give her more roll. A male pro who is also averaging 270 yards may be trying to hit a high fade (left to right ball flight with side/back spin) which gives less distance but is more controllable.

The approach shot. So, let's give her the 270 yards on a, say, 450 yard par 4. That leaves her with 180 yards onto the green and a PGA pro with 150 yards. 180 yards to Annika is a solid 5-iron. Now, here's another part of the equation that the media or the LPGA pros never talked about; ball trajectory. Annika's 5 iron (and every 5-iron I've ever seen a woman hit) will have a much flatter trajectory with very little "bite", or back spin, on the ball. As a result, her ball WILL hit the green at a shallow angle and roll forward a great distance. It will be very difficult for her to get close to a pin for a reasonable birdie put. On the PGA tour, reasonable is defined as within 15 feet. 8 feet being where the percentages of making the putt go up dramatically.

The PGA pro, with his 150-yard shot, will most likely be hitting a 9-iron (some even a wedge) and, since it is much easier to control a 9-iron, will be able to fire right at the flag. A golf shot by a man has a very high trajectory and, since he's hitting a 9 instead of a 5, will be even higher. It will also have much more "bite" (backspin imparted by the grooves on the club) which allows him to control directly how much the ball rolls forward on the green, if at all, depending on how hard he hits the shot (the favorite ESPN golf clip is of a guy hitting a wedge onto a green that backs up 30 feet).

As a result, a man will put a 9-iron within 15 feet a very high percentage of the time and 8 feet a reasonable amount of times. Annika with her 5-iron will be lucky to be within 25 to 30 feet. Over the course of 18 holes in a day and 72 holes in a tournament, Annika will just not be able to go low enough because she won't have "makeable" birdie puts. Many times on even longer par 4s she will be hitting fairway woods into tight greens. In those cases she'd be lucky to make par. I won't even get into par 5s which men expect to birdie and she'd be scrambling for par.

The short game around the green. A while back, Annika and Tiger played a practice round together and something that Annika said struck me as very odd. She was amazed at the variety and creativity of Tiger's shots around the green. Specifically, she was speaking of the "flop" shot. A flop shot is when you are close to the green and in the rough but there is a hazard in front of you (water, a bunker, waste area, etc.). The only shot possible is a one that goes straight in the air and lands gently by the pin. A very delicate shot which is all feel. Tiger had to teach her this shot. She had admitted to the reporter that she didn't know how to hit a flop shot. As a golfer, I see this as a huge statement. She's the number one female player in the world and, because the women's courses aren't as difficult, never has to face this shot. The point is this. I finally realized that not only are women playing a shorter game but one that is almost devoid of any of the strategy that a PGA pro has to face.

Putting. Purely mental and hard to handicap. Call it even.

Why all this detail? Well, it backs up your point that the detail (logic) doesn't matter in an argument. All that matters is the emotion. The sound bites from the media, other LPGA player and prominent women in general were comical in their overwhelming ignorance. I felt bad for the PGA players because they all just had to go along. The ones that actually said what they were thinking were vilified for it. Within the golf world, Vijay Singh will *never* recover from the comments he made about Queen Annika.

Anyway, here's to 300. If you're ever in Tampa, the first golf lesson is free.

Bill Stoesser
Lutz, FL

I figured as a "sports guy" you'd appreciate finally making it onto the "Aardvark Comment Leader Board" with only one issue left on the clock (to seriously compound a metaphor).

Thanks for a very instructive lesson on the gender realities behind professional golf—one less "brick in the feminist wall," as it were.

I sincerely appreciate the offer of a free golf lesson, but I've seen a couple of otherwise sensible guys—of whom I never woulda thunk it—turn into complete stark, staring golf nuts. I'm trying to get—and keep—serious addictions out *of my life. Not looking for new ones.*

Fore!

* * * * * * *

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In the first 150+ issues of *Cerebus*, it was easy to be carried along emotionally by the story (as it is in any good fiction). Readers wondered, "What's going to happen in the Cerebus/Jaka relationship? What is Cerebus's role as Prime Minister? As Pope? What is at stake in his battle with Cirin?" But later (in *Reads* and *Minds*), once "Dave" entered the narrative, readers were forced into a more intellectual involvement. It's been difficult ever since to become emotionally engaged with the characters because Dave acknowledges the fiction within the story itself.

> "'Fiction' is a pretense. But if its writers insistently call attention to the pretense, they are not pretending. For the ethical critic, the writer's acknowledgement that he is just pretending is taken as evidence not of seriousness and sincerity but of frivolity, game-playing, literary high jinks. The writer's duty is to pretend seriously—not to say, seriously or playfully, that it is a pretense. What is at stake here is the whole system of traditional distinctions between reality and fiction on one hand and truth and falsity on the other."
>
> —Wallace Martin, *Recent Theories of Narrative*

In Martin's words, Dave "called attention to the pretense," so he's "not pretending" any longer. We could argue with that second part. Perhaps Dave is pretending about the pretense. But then we'd get into a hall-of-mirrors, infinite regression kind of thing.

Martin is saying that it's unethical to draw the reader into a story, and then to say, "Just kidding."

Exactly. It was a huge risk to the story for Dave to enter the narrative. A lot of readers began to see the "story" as something trivial.

Is the first half of the Cerebus story ultimately just something the reader engages in emotionally, while the 300-issue project as a whole exists to engage the reader intellectually so that he begins to think about the ideas of emotion and reason? If so, then the reader's initial emotional involvement is necessary to set up the subsequent theme about the importance of reason.

> "Plato characteriz[es] the effect of poetry [and storytelling] as a 'crippling of the mind.' It is a kind of a disease, for which one has to acquire an antidote. The antidote must consist of a knowledge 'of what things really are.' In short, poetry is a sort of mental poison, and is the enemy of truth....Plato winds up his argument: 'Crucial indeed is the struggle...to keep faithful to righteousness and virtue in the face of temptation, be it of fame or money or power, or of poetry—yes, even of poetry.'"
>
> —Eric Havelock, *Preface to Plato*

Here's the critical question: Is Dave guilty of presenting the second half of the story in such a way that it says about the first half, "Just kidding"? Or is he doing something else: does the second half incorporate the first half into yet a larger drama that includes Cerebus, Dave, the reader, and reflections about the nature of creativity and of life (creation) itself? Is that the real "story"?

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